

Forest Consultants Newsletter

MARCH 2003



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Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) Under Development

The Maine Forest Service is developing a new program to assist small woodland owners in managing their lands – FLEP – the Forest Land Enhancement Program. Part of the Farm Bill, FLEP is divided into three distinct types of assistance – technical, educational, and financial. Maine will administer FLEP through its existing Be Woods Wise program.

Since 1995, there has been a 1.9 million acre increase in nonindustrial private forestland ownership, with a corresponding 1.6 million acre decrease in the forest industry ownership class.

Since the inception of the Stewardship Program, more than 5,125 landowners have taken advantage of the

program, with quality natural resource management plans on more than 568,000 acres. However, this is only 5% of the landowners and 8.6% of the acres.

Maine's program will focus on water quality issues and timber stand improvement activities, with a secondary focus on forest health practices, and improvement and maintenance of wildlife habitat.

One of the first tasks the Maine Forest Service has is to develop a State Priority Plan, outlining program policies, priorities and procedures necessary to accomplish the objectives. The Maine Forest Service needs your input on this draft Plan.

We have posted it on our web site at:

www.maineforestservice.org

and we invite your comments. It is important that this program meet the needs of the landowners that it serves.

Direct your comments to:
Kathy Nitschke
Stewardship Coordinator
Maine Forest Service
22 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0022
(207) 287-1073
1-800-367-0223 (in-state only)
kathy.nitschke@maine.gov

You may comment using the form at the web site, call us, email, or write. Please let us know your thoughts by Friday, April 11.

More on FLEP—Training, Funding, Starting Date

Funding for FLEP has been held up in the Congressional appropriations process and by the Office of Management and Budget. The USDA Forest Service has not been able to give us a firm starting date. We hope to be able to start taking applications for cost-share assistance this summer, with regional consultant train-

ing workshops in May and June.

The best advice I can give to consultants and landowners at this time is to get new stewardship plans completed, old ones (9+ years old) updated, and bring other types of plans up to stewardship standards.

A current stewardship quality management plan will be required for participation in FLEP. Get the plans done now and hit the ground running.

Maine Tree Growth Tax Law

Last year the legislature amended the Tree Growth Tax Law to clarify that assessors have the right to ask for, and the landowner must produce, a copy of the forest management and harvest plan that meets the requirements of the Tree Growth Tax Law.

Assessors may request to see any landowner's plan to assist in determining that a landowner has a plan; that the plan meets minimum requirements; and/or, to ascer-

tain that the landowner is managing forest land in accordance with the plan as required by law. Assessors may also request assistance from the Maine Forest Service in reviewing these plans.

The Maine Forest Service and Maine Revenue Services interpret the amended statute to mean that assessors may see or possess a copy of a plan for a reasonable amount of time

to verify that a plan exists or to facilitate an evaluation that a plan is appropriate or is being followed. There is no intent to require or suggest that assessors should routinely require all landowners to submit a copy of each plan or to have any plan kept continuously on file with assessors.

Assessors in possession of a plan must treat the plan as confidential and take all necessary steps to keep that

information confidential. Failure to provide reasonable safeguards for any plan on file may open the assessors to potential penalties. Also, landowners have a right to change their plan whenever they want, provided any alteration is consistent with the statute. Thus, it is possible that a plan copy on file may be obsolete.

Remember: A landowner must file a complete Forest Operations Notification prior to starting any timber harvest

Forest Operations Notifications

Just a Reminder—

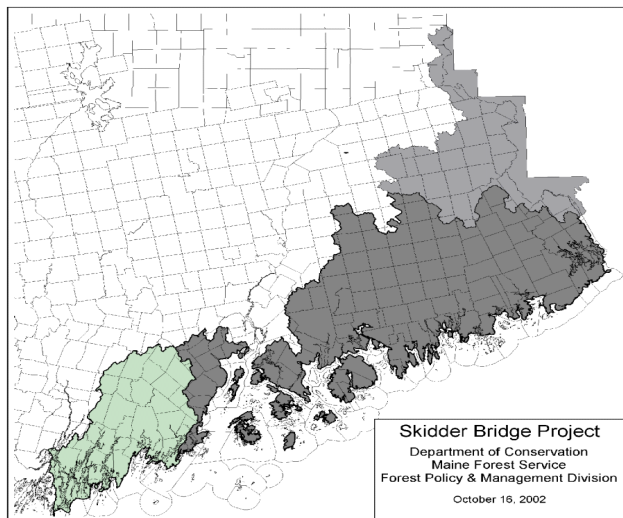
All notifications must include the new addendum where the landowner indicates whether the land being harvested is enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Program and must certify that the harvest is consistent with the forest management and harvest plan for the property.

Notifications submitted without the addendum will be considered incomplete and will be returned.

You can download a copy of the addendum at www.state.me.us/doc/mfs/fpm/forms/addendum.pdf

New Maps Available—

Town maps that meet the requirements for maps for the Forest Operations Notification are now available at the MFS office in Augusta. These 11"X17" maps can be easily copied and folded to 8 1/2"X11" for inclusion with Notifications or as a location map in a management plan.



Skidder Bridge Program Area Expands

The Maine Forest Service skidder bridge program has expanded its geographical area. All coastal watersheds in the midcoast and downeast, including the St. Croix drainage, are now eligible, as shown in the accompanying map.

Under this program, loggers can apply for cost-share funds to build or buy a temporary skidder bridge. Funds are still available, though

several bridges have already been cost-shared and additional applications have been approved and are pending completion.

For complete information on program requirements or for an application, please call Mort Moesswilde at the Maine Forest Service : 1-800-367-0223 or (207) 287-8430.

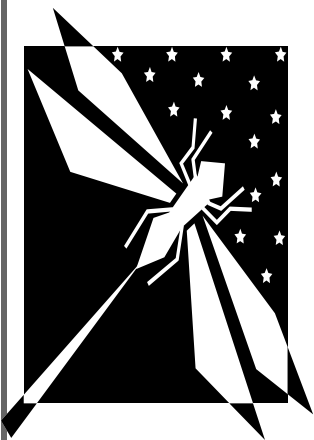
Forest Insect & Disease Update

Balsam gall midge populations dropped significantly in 2002, and are expected to remain low in 2003. It is unlikely that Christmas tree growers will need to spray at all for this pest this year.

Eastern spruce budworm populations were low in 2002 and no defoliation was detected. Spruce budworm is not expected to be a problem in 2003.

Balsam woolly adelgid continues to kill and deform balsam fir trees in forest stands, particularly in eastern and south central Maine. Affected trees have gouty (swollen) twigs at the base of buds, and tops of infested mature trees characteristically have flat tops. Christmas tree plantations are increasingly becoming affected as well, rendering infested trees unmarketable. Control of this insect with pesticides is impractical in forest stands, and difficult in Christmas tree plantations. Cold weather during the winter of 2002-2003 may have caused significant winter mortality of adelgids, but we are unsure of that yet. To manage this pest in forest stands, accelerate the harvest date. To manage this pest in Christmas tree stands, do not interplant new seedlings among infested trees, and consider the use of pesticides.

Gypsy moth defoliated 51,506 acres in Maine in 2002, but it might have been much worse. Projections going into last spring indicated about 200,000 acres at risk, but fungi, parasites and viruses combined to limit gypsy moth populations.



Hemlock woolly adelgid has still not become established in Maine on native hemlocks. While we found and destroyed 21 infested ornamental hemlocks in landscape situations in 2002, this search and destroy effort seems to be paying dividends so far in keeping the insect out of the Maine woods.

Larch sawfly was a significant problem in 2002 with defoliated, discolored or dead larch present on 7,550 acres. The problem was worst in central Penobscot, eastern Piscataquis, and northeastern Aroostook counties. Complete defoliation in successive seasons may cause branch, top or whole tree mortality. Trees stressed by drought or seasonal flooding are most at risk. Larch sawfly populations are greatly affected by parasites, predators, and disease, so it is difficult for us to predict 2003 populations. But if sawflies become a problem, insecticides are effective against larvae as they

appear in the summer.

White pine weevil continues to be a problem in white pine plantations statewide. Chemical control options have become increasingly limited in recent years, and lindane is becoming difficult to obtain. There is evidence that permethrin, a synthetic pyrethroid insecticide, is effective against white pine weevil, but forestry uses have been pulled from the labels of most, if not all, registered permethrin products. We are presently conducting a search to locate possible alternative chemical control options.

White pine blister rust control efforts continued on a limited basis during 2002. Ribes (the alternate host for white pine blister rust) were destroyed on 710 acres of high quality pine forest land. As budgetary constraints continue to erode our ability to conduct large scale control efforts, we are seeking alternative approaches to manage this disease. One of these approaches may involve the inclusion of white pine blister rust control as a new FLEP cost share practice. If so, there will be an opportunity for forestry consultants to participate.

Last summer's drought, this winter's cold, and natural insect population cycles are all expected to affect the insect and disease conditions that forest landowners will face in 2003

For more information on forest insects and disease, contact the Maine Forest Service Entomology lab at (207) 287-2431

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We're on the web!
www.maineforestservice.org

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Sawmill Demonstration Scheduled

May 3, 2003—Ross Clair, a Wood-Miser dealer, will host a workshop at his sawmill facility in Chesterville. The Clairs have a great facility with heated spaces along with the large covered demonstration area that will help if the weather doesn't cooperate.

Peter Lammert will be there to discuss flat sawing, quarter sawing, taper sawing and how to sticker lumber properly. Don't feel confined to these topics, and bring your own ideas to throw into the discussion hopper.

The day will start at 9 a.m. with coffee and sweets, blend into the demos and discussion, offer hot dogs and beans for lunch and last until the final question is answered in the mid-afternoon.

Directions: The Clairs operate Pine Tree Lumber located at 548 Borough Road in Chesterville. Borough Road is off Route 156 which runs from Wilton/Dryden to the west to Chesterville on the east.

For more information call Pete Lammert at 287-4995 or Ross Clair at 645-2072. There is no charge for this workshop.

The Lammert Report—*Push May be Coming to Shove*

We know that there are not as many loggers as there used to be, and some of the remaining loggers have bought some fairly expensive equipment that must be operated up to 22 hours a day just to pay for the iron. All this work has filled most of the remaining primary processing mill woodyards to full if not overflowing and soon the prices may go down.

What's the logger to do? The day diesel hits \$2 a gallon (if it hasn't by the time you read this) even some of the sawmills might be considering if they should keep on going. And with Maine pulp being very expensive, if not the most expensive pulp in the marketplace, Maine's pulp and paper industry is hanging in there. All the loggers hear now from the pulpwood buyers is "we gotta cut the price we're paying you."

What's the logger to do? Well one answer I heard recently was to pay stumpage for the logs coming from a woodlot but not for the pulp. It was a pine woodlot so if you are generating between 1½ - 2 cords of pulp per 1000 board feet of sawlogs and if you were paying \$6/cord stumpage -that's \$12 for every MBF of logs harvested. If you are getting \$120 to \$150 per MBF for the logs, that's 10% or less of the MBF stumpage price that you wouldn't be paid for the pulp.

With competing markets for the logger's mechanical skills (current operator wage rates in the New England area for heavy equipment operators are just a dime under \$50/ hour) the green, green grass of those pastures is very ap-

pealing, especially as someone else will be filling in all the red tape forms.

Think about it. The mills can't/won't pay any more, all logging costs are rising, new legislation keeps them running after their chokers, etc. The only place where anyone can "give" anything at all is the cost of stumpage.

Pete Lammert is the Maine Forest Service's Utilization and Marketing Forester. You can contact him at: (207) 287-4995
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